Alleged Author of Her Ruin." "A girl's madness" combines the vulnerability of being a woman, a young woman, and mad with ideas of innocence and possibly even temporariness which make McIlroy's assault look all the more unchivalrously "advantageous." The Asylum appears simultaneously as a place of refuge and a place of darkness and horror. As a refuge it makes McIlroy's violation all the more dramatic; as a place of darkness it serves as a foil for Alice's subsequent revelations.

Yet the content of the article suggests a more penetrable space. One might wonder what kind of histories the writer refers to when he observes that the case is "probably without a precedent in the history of Toronto institutions," since even the Annual Reports mention instances of abuse among patients, suicides, murders, and elopements. However, he immediately glances at another body of lore, better acquaintance with which might have made Alice's adventure less surprising:

> For several days there were ugly rumours current on the streets as to the treatment experienced by an unfortunate young girl confined in the Toronto Lunatic Asylum, but it was not until a late hour last night that any definite statements were made. It was indefinitely hinted that a girl named Alice Bedson had been outraged while she was still a patient in the Asylum, and that a few months after she had been discharged from the institution as cured, she was delivered of a child, but those who had any knowledge of the management of the institution were loth [sic] to believe that there was any foundation for the reports.

Many might have known fairly soon of Alice's delivery. In his Asylum Diary Clark indicates that the father told him. Miss Bastedo would subsequently have told a few colleagues, after which the story would have been quickly spread throughout the Asylum, if it had not been already. It also seems quite possible that Alice's neighbours knew about her delivery, and even some of the Asylum staff, such as McIlroy's sister. If rumour had really been as rampant as the writer for the Evening News suggests, some people must have known about the matter for months. The last sentence above certainly suggests that some people knew about it before Clark.